

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE  
COMMISSION MILITARY AND  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency  
200 W. Washington St., Suite 301  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789**

**November 2013**

# **INDIANA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

## **2013**

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**Fort Wayne**

**Speaker Brian Bosma**

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**Executive Director**  
**Legislative Services Agency**

# **Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs**

## **Membership Roster**

### **Senators**

**Allen Paul, Chair  
Richmond**

**Michael Delph  
Carmel**

**Frank Mrvan  
Hammond**

**Richard Young  
Milltown**

### **Representatives**

**James Baird  
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**John Bartlett  
Indianapolis**

**Martin Carbaugh  
Fort Wayne**

**Karlee Macer  
Indianapolis**

### **Lay Members**

**Jerry Hogan  
Warsaw**

**Sergeant Klay South  
Indianapolis**

**Lt. Gen. Carol Mutter  
Brownsburg**

### **Legislative Services Agency Staff**

**Lauren Sewell, Fiscal Analyst  
Francine Rowley-Lacy, Attorney**

**November 2013**

A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Commission can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>.

## FINAL REPORT

### **Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs**

#### **I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE**

The Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation (IC 2-5-20) directing the Commission to study the following:

1. Matters relating to veterans and veterans' affairs.
2. Matters relating to the active and reserve members of the armed forces of the United States.
3. Veterans' procurement preferences.

The Commission may also study other topics assigned by the Legislative Council or as directed by the Commission's chair.

The Commission is required to file a report with the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

The Commission consists of 12 members: 4 members of the House of Representatives, 4 members of the Senate, and 4 lay members. The chair of the Legislative Council appoints the chair of the Commission.

#### **II. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM**

The Commission was assigned no additional topics of study by the Legislative Council. The Commission met two times during the 2013 interim session: September 25, 2013, and October 23, 2013.

#### **III. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY**

At the September 25 and October 23 meetings, the Commission heard testimony from witnesses on the following topics:

##### 1. Veterans' Issues Impacting Women

At the September 25 meeting, Ms. Lisa Wilken presented testimony on the topic of state women veterans coordinators. She described the significance of this role and outlined the duties that a state women veterans coordinator might have within the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA).

At the October 23 meeting, Ms. Wilken again testified in support of creating a position for a women veterans coordinator. Jim Brown, Director of the IDVA, agreed that he would support creating the position in the next budget year.

##### 2. Recommended Legislation for Veterans' Affairs

At the September 25 meeting, Brigadier General Jim Bauerle, as chairman of the

Veterans Affairs Commission, presented a list of nine proposals for future legislation. As Legislative Chair of the Military/Veterans Coalition of Indiana, he presented additional goals for the 2014 and 2015 legislative sessions.

At the October 23 meeting, Ron Martin, representing the Military/Veterans Coalition of Indiana, presented testimony on actions the state could take to make Indiana a more veteran-friendly state. Mr. Martin's recommendations included removing the three-year eligibility period for assistance from the Military Family Relief Fund, remitting education fees for children of veterans, instituting a veterans court, and recognizing hyperbaric oxygen therapy as an approved medical treatment for veterans.

At the October 23 meeting, Kent Morgan, representing the National and Indiana Disabled American Veterans organizations, expressed his support for a bipartisan resolution urging Congress not to stop pension and benefits payments to veterans because of political disagreements.

### 3. Update from the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs

At the September 25 meeting, Mr. Russ Eaglin, Deputy Director of the IDVA, updated the Commission on the department's recent work, including employment opportunity coordination, media outreach, and the study and implementation of best practices in veterans' affairs.

At the October 23 meeting, Mr. Brown reported on the training and accreditation of county veterans service officers, modernization of the IDVA website, coordination of services for women veterans, changes made at the veterans home, and improvements made to the Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

For more information on the Commission's meetings, meeting minutes can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>.

## **IV. COMMISSION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Commission considered PD 3381 and PD 3382. PD 3381 would remove an outdated list of veterans organizations from statute and replace it with language including all current veterans organizations. PD 3382 would exempt individuals who serve in a reserve component of the military from jury duty in any court of Indiana if they are on orders. The Commission voted to recommend PD 3381 with a vote of 8-0, and the Commission voted to recommend PD 3382 with a vote of 9-0.

The Commission agreed by consent to initiate legislation in the 2014 legislative session addressing the following issues:

- Expanding eligibility to access the Military Family Relief Fund by changing the requirement that assistance be requested within three years of the date that active duty ends or the conflict is ended.
- Creating a full-time position within the IDVA for a women veterans coordinator.

- Increasing financial incentives, punitive damages, or both to prevent hiring discrimination against individuals serving in the military.
- Requiring colleges and universities in Indiana to accept transfer credits earned by military service members from other institutions of higher education toward degree attainment.

## WITNESS LIST

BG Jim Bauerle, Veterans' Affairs Commission, Military/Veterans Coalition of Indiana  
Jim Brown, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs  
Russ Eaglin, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs  
Ron Martin, Military/Veterans Coalition of Indiana  
Kent Morgan, National Disabled American Veterans, State of Indiana Disabled  
American Veterans  
Lisa Wilken